

BYRON L. DORGAN
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CHAIRMAN, DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

December 19, 2003

Tom Wychor
Chairman
Air Line Pilots Association MEC - Mesaba Airlines
7900 International Drive, Suite 875
Bloomington, MN 55425

John Spanjers
President
Mesaba Airlines
1000 Gentian Road
Egan, MN 55121

Dear Mr. Wychor and Mr. Spanjers:

I have long been a supporter of Mesaba Airlines and its employees. You provide essential transportation service to our State and, for that reason, I have supported the interests of the company and its employees in Congress. I am writing today because of my deep concern about the possible failure of the collective bargaining process to arrive at a labor contract between Mesaba and the Air Line Pilots Association, MEC.

I do not pretend to know all of the issues in your dispute. But I do know the severe negative impact a shutdown of your airline will have on our State. Anyone who lived through the strike in 1998 understands how devastating it was when 85 percent of North Dakota's air service disappeared overnight. Air service in Fargo was cut by 90 percent, Bismarck 82 percent, and Grand Forks and Minot were completely left without air service. Reliable estimates put the cost to North Dakota at \$650,000 per day in losses from that strike.

I understand that Mesaba does not fly all of Northwest's flights into and out of North Dakota, but it does carry a significant amount of traffic and a shut-down would be a devastating blow to our State. Any labor stoppage would be felt far beyond the company and its employees. It would have significant consequences for our economy and the traveling public of North Dakota. Every effort must be undertaken to prevent that from happening.

I recognize that there are times, for both sides, when resolving disputes in collective bargaining sessions is very difficult. But you have another interest at your bargaining table, and that's the interest of the customers that both the company and the union members benefit from serving. Your customers provide your company profits and employee salaries, and both parties have an obligation to your customers to avoid a shutdown of air service from a labor strike. Both the company and the employees must understand and recognize that.

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I hope both parties will find a way to reach a fair settlement. Please do not allow these negotiations to hold hostage customers that your airline and its employees rely on for their livelihood. It happened several years ago and should not happen again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Byron', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Byron L. Dorgan
U.S. Senator

c.c. Richard Anderson, CEO, Northwest Airlines